

Customer Service Training Opportunities

Forging the Links -- Introductory Workshop

Unit Summary

Forging the Links workshops encourage participants to unleash their creativity and leadership capabilities to enhance EPA customer service. The workshop uses exercises that are practical; they don't deal with "blue sky" theories. Instead, they help participants identify concrete skills that improve how well people work together, how sensibly work is done, and how satisfying work is for each individual and the people around them. These skills transfer from situations at EPA to ones experienced with family, friends, and service providers. The workshop will help each participant to identify personal strengths they have in people skills as well as areas where a little improvement might go a long way. Some skills no one can ever be "too good at" when it comes to delivering great service while fulfilling EPA's mission. It will also help in identifying skills that can work to overcome specific roadblocks to excellent customer service within programs and organizations.

Learning Outcomes

At the completion of the workshop, which is focused on improving real-life customer interaction, participants will be able to:

- Define customer service as it applies to EPA employees.
- Define EPA's customers.
- Assess personal ability to achieve EPA customer service standards and world class service.
- Recognize ways to enhance or improve internal customer relations to meet and exceed external customer needs.
- Encourage everyone to identify new ways to improve customer satisfaction.
- Link EPA's Six Principles of Customer Service to EPA's mission and their individual work.

Follow-up Skills Courses

1. The Leader in Each of Us

Unit Summary

Today, far-reaching advances in technology, continually increasing customer expectations, and the expansion of the global marketplace are redefining the standards for customer service success. As a result, organizations everywhere face a host of challenges, many of which were not visible even a few years ago. One of the key methods for responding to these new challenges is to make leadership the responsibility of everyone in the organization.

This is an awareness unit that defines what is common to leadership roles regardless of the individual's specific assignment or position in the organization. This unit will help each individual

take personal responsibility to achieve EPA's mission of protecting public health and the environment while providing excellent customer service.

Learning Objectives

At the completion of this unit, participants will be able to:

- Explain the need for leaders to fulfill expanded, flexible roles in organizations and what that means for their own jobs.
- Describe five strategies leaders can use to create focus for themselves as they handle new roles and responsibilities in high-involvement organizations.
- Determine ways they can use the five strategies to increase their effectiveness in their own jobs.
- Assess their level of effectiveness as a leader in light of the five critical leadership strategies.

Leadership Strategies

The five leadership strategies that apply to all leaders are:

- Create a compelling future.
- Let the customer drive the organization.
- Involve every mind.
- Manage work horizontally.
- Build personal credibility.

2. Moving From Conflict to Collaboration

Unit Summary

Changes in the workplace are placing new emphasis on the importance of effective collaboration. Organizations are expecting employees at all levels to work together, often across functions, to make decisions that were formerly the exclusive responsibility of management. Further, employees are called upon to develop partnerships with co-regulators, states, tribes, local governments and other federal agencies, as well as with the private sector (regulated community). These types of collaboration can bring out new potentials for conflict, thus creating a need for employees at every level of an organization to have the skills to deal successfully with conflict.

This unit gives participants the skills they need to turn conflicts into opportunities to achieve positive, productive results.

Learning Objectives

At the completion of this unit, participants will be able to:

- Explain influences that are contributing to conflict in today's organizations.
- Identify behavior patterns that undermine the ability to address conflict constructively.
- Describe productive methods of dealing with these undermining behaviors.

- Distinguish between positions taken in a conflict and the underlying issues.
- Use the Key Actions to address conflict facing them on the job.

Key Actions

- Establish mutual involvement.
- Seek to understand the other person's point of view.
- Present your perspective of the problem and its impact.
- Decide on an appropriate plan of action.
- Express your appreciation for the other person's efforts.

3. Proactive Listening

Unit Summary

In today's environment, intense competition and rapid change have dramatically expanded the need for information. In the past, people had to know how to do their jobs, but now people need a bigger picture view. That means having information about external influences and about the work of other functions.

Proactive listening helps meet this need. It is also a powerful tool for building and maintaining strong relationships required to reach personal and organizational goals including providing world class service to internal and external customers.

In this unit, participants learn verbal and nonverbal techniques for moving from a reactive to a proactive approach to listening.

Learning Objectives

At the completion of this unit, participants will be able to:

- Identify situations in which good listening can make the difference between success and failure.
- List typical barriers to effective listening.
- List specific techniques to deal with communication styles they find challenging.
- Use the Key Actions to listen proactively.
- Identify steps they can take to reinforce proactive listening.

Key Actions

- Show interest in what the person has to say.
- Ask questions to clarify, gather information, and focus the conversation.
- Let the person know what you understand.

4. Clarifying Customer Expectations

Unit Summary

Service improvement begins and ends with a focus on the customer. Support for EPA's mission is maintained through satisfied external customers, and work is done more efficiently when the internal customers are satisfied. For several reasons, however, it may be difficult to initiate a discussion about expectations with a customer.

In this unit, managers and employees learn the skill of realizing a customer's expectations as a preliminary step in the quality-improvement process. Participants learn how to create a partnership with their customers and how to devise a plan to meet the customers' needs without over-compromising. This kind of customer interaction provides the organization with valuable information about where and how to improve the quality of its products and services.

Learning Objectives

At the completion of this unit, participants will be able to:

- Identify the critical role of customer expectations in process improvement.
- Uncover short- and long-term customer expectations and identify the customer's key expectations.
- Successfully demonstrate the Key Actions in a practice situation.
- Plan to use the Key Actions to improve the quality of work processes and partnerships.

Key Actions

- Identify the product or service and explain why you want to discuss it.
- Ask questions to clarify what the customer expects from your product or service.
- Summarize your understanding of the customer's expectations.
- Discuss what you will do to meet these expectations.
- Agree on next steps and set a follow-up date
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5. Resolving Customer Dissatisfaction

Unit Summary

Dissatisfied customers are a "gold mine" of opportunity. Their grievances should be pursued actively because a customer complaint that is resolved effectively can turn a dissatisfied customer into an enthusiastic supporter. Furthermore, one customer's dissatisfaction often points to problems that could affect other customers. This information can be used to identify problems and find permanent solutions to ineffective processes.

This unit provides practical skills that employees and managers can use to work with a customer (either inside or outside the organization) who, for some reason, has not received the expected service or product. Participants learn to defuse the customer's annoyance and to refocus the customer on a successful resolution to the problem.

Learning Objectives

At the completion of this unit, participants will be able to:

- Understand the purpose and benefits of resolving customer dissatisfaction.
- Handle customer dissatisfaction and refocus efforts on ways to meet expectations.
- Successfully demonstrate the Key Actions in a practice situation.
- Plan to use the Key Actions to improve the quality of work processes and partnerships.

Key Actions

- Acknowledge the customer's dissatisfaction.
- Find out why the customer is dissatisfied.
- Summarize to show your understanding of the situation.
- Jointly develop a plan to meet the customer's expectations.
- Gain agreement on next steps and set a follow-up date.

6. Influencing for Win-Win Outcomes

Unit Summary

Successful organizations thrive on new ideas because new ideas can lead to finding better ways to work. Putting people's ideas to use is a great morale booster, and the resulting improvements please customers.

But in today's cross-functional workplace, ideas often need support from a wide range of people in order to be successfully implemented. Unless people have the confidence and skills to win support for their ideas by influencing others, many good ideas will be lost.

In this unit, participants learn to analyze, develop, and present their ideas in a way that will help them win the necessary support.

Learning Objectives

At the completion of this unit, participants will be able to:

- Explain why influencing people for win-win outcomes is an important skill in today's results-oriented organizations.
- Recognize situations where it is appropriate to use influencing skills.
- Identify a variety of factors that motivate people.
- Use the Key Actions to influence people in all areas and at all levels of the organization.

Key Actions

- Plan the best approach.
- Establish mutual involvement in the situation.
- Explain your recommendation and its benefits.
- Ask for reactions and address concerns.
- Ask for the specific support you need and explain what you will do in return.
- Agree on an action plan.